

ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
Meeting April 10, 2012  
Minutes

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TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting was opened by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachman at 7:00 PM.

Also present were Pam Lynn (PL), Anita Rogers (AR), David Honn (DH), Michaela Moran (MM), Ron Rose (RR), David Barrat (DB) and Mike Gowing, BoS liaison.

7:00: There were no citizens' concerns.

7:05: The minutes of the March 27, 2012 meeting were accepted by consent unanimously.

7:10: Remodeling; Application #1206-53 Windsor Avenue. The parties are remodeling the second floor bathroom to include a stacked washer and dryer. Because the roofline limits placement of the dryer vent to the sidewall of the house the parties have applied for a certificate of appropriateness and advice regarding its placement. Placement of the vent in the rear of the house would mean cutting a hole in a slate roof.

Approval of the CoA would contain the following conditions: Paint the dryer vent the same color as the house or the trim depending where it is located; tuck the vent as discreetly and as high as possible within the very wide trim board under the eave but not too high to avoid trapping moisture from the vapors from the dryer.

AR The soffit is sloped. Placement should be one foot on the frieze if high enough to be possible but not too tight to the window casing. Place it entirely in the frieze or below the trim. PL It should be up as high as reasonable. KAB Agrees with AR. DH The shorter the vent duct, the better, no more than 3.5 - 5 feet. DB Agrees with AR. AR Check with the contractor to see if this is feasible. If so, there is no need to come back for consideration of "Plan B".

Finding that the issue is with the jurisdiction of the HDC, MM Moves to issue a CoA for dryer vent at 53 Windsor Avenue with the following conditions: placement of the vent above the trim board; paint the vent to blend in with the surrounding exterior; hide the vent as much as possible under the roof overhang. Seconded by DB. Voted unanimously. However if there is need for Plan B, we can amend the vote at the next meeting. The CoA is good for a year after issuance.

7:30: 81 School Street; KAB and MM recused. David Crowley (DC), contractor, DMC Design, and Alex Iannini co-applicant appeared. DC referred to plan AO.1. Application for installing windows in the basement of the residential building. Seeking certificate of non-applicability for a retaining wall and windows in the rear of the building. Retaining wall is a part of the requirements of the state building code applicable to this construction. Required to ensure foundation stability. Ref. to Plan SO. Basement windows on right and left sides near the rear corners of the house. Retaining wall to be flush with grade so not in HDC's jurisdiction. Handrail is to be positioned on the top of the retaining wall. DH Tie the house together by using the handrail for the retaining wall as for the deck. Would also be more cost effective. Do imbeds and tie the handrail to it. Moved and seconded that a Certificate of non-applicability be issued for the for the retaining wall and associated stairs, the rear facing

door and windows as they are not in HDC's jurisdiction. Also moved and seconded to amend the original application to include two 32" X 20" basement windows one each to be at the rear corners of the house shown in the east and west elevations. Also add a mahogany handrail to be on top of retaining wall. Moved and seconded to issue a CoA for the windows and handrail. Voted unanimously. AR to contact Mark.

KAB and MM returned to table.

RR noted that he saw a new Barrett and Company sign at the River Street Lothrop Mills project showing the site to be subdivided differently than had been approved when issuing a C of A. MM to call applicant to see if any changes had been made. DB to call broker for information regarding the altered site as depicted on the sign.

8:00: WAVE-Application #1206 for installing Photo Voltaic cells on building in back on Spruce Street. Public Hearing set for 8PM. KAB read the notice of the public hearing. Appearing for applicants are Mathias Rosenfeld and Javier Ramirez. AR Liaison. The address of the building is 3 Spruce Street and is located many feet away from Spruce Street. It is thought to have been an apple storage building. Not considered to be a significant building and is of limited visibility from Spruce Street and Mass. Ave. The P-V cells would be of limited visibility from Spruce Street and more visible from Mass. Ave. Could possibly use vegetation to screen some but not all of the P-V cells from Mass. Ave. MR doesn't know how it will look from Mass. Ave. Age of the building is unknown. Asphalt roof is to be replaced by a metal roof. The P-V cells to be clipped to the seams of the metal roofing material. AR It is not a significant building. P-V cells on metal roof are acceptable. PL, RR, DH, and DB agree. MM Would like to know more about the building including history of use, age, listing on Historic Register inventory sheet. How will it look from Mass. Ave? It would be difficult to restore the building to its present condition if the P-V cells are removed. There are narrow strips of roof at the ends of the series of P-V cells. It will be 85% covered with P-V cells. The skylights will be covered and the vents will have to be moved. What about the issue of replacing the P-V cells when they have gotten old? KAB If we are concerned about visibility from Mass. Ave., perhaps applicant could cover it up with a large tree near Twin Seafood. MR Trees won't be that effective. If anyone looks he/she will see it. DB Has no issues with the application. MG has no issue either. PL The roof is acceptable. It depends on how the certificate is worded. It could be that the area was industrial and the certificate could be written in a very site-specific way. MM We need to scan Docushare for an inventory listing. Certain it was a apple storage building.

AR Moves to approve installation of a standing seam metal roof per the photos with the installation of photovoltaic cells that will be installed on plane with the roof the installation to have clips and seams. Finding is that the building is within the jurisdiction of the HDC, it is minimally visible from the public way. There will be a raised seam roof. The cells will be nearly invisible from the public way and mostly hidden by buildings in front of this building. KAB Supports the motion. Not a major contributing building. This continues its history as an industrial building. Motion seconded by DB. DH The process is reversible if the P-V Cells are removed. Voted unanimously. The public hearing was closed at 8:25.

WAVE Project update: The original CoA terminates in June. We have time until the extension runs out. Where do we start. What is the board's consensus?

Do we replicate? What are the pros and cons. The CoA covers what was approved. New buildings means new construction and the current CoA is no longer applicable. Do we amend the current CoA? Look at it all again. Maybe a project would have more strengths if there is no re-use. Changes what could do could make it better. Don't want any pretend buildings see it be special with new buildings.

PL No spirit of what was there. About letting go preserve spirit. More modest buildings. Reduction in size what can be rented and yellow house recreation. Original project contemplated different tenants.

KAB Thereafter we did not consider use of the buildings. Rather we need to consider ways of adoptive reuse. What is most important is to have a great look. Move the blue building, save the façade of the front of the barn. We need to be open to ideas even though we do not want to demolish the buildings.

MR We lost the theater tenant. Not giving up on replacing the theater. Tenants need to be flexible enough to use the theater area as a cultural element.

KAB Can't consider building use. Need to look at how it will look.

RR It is possible to study the project to from a massing mode. Use what is there as a base for things to be saved and what is to be replicated. Have more sensitivity to tradition; play with models to see how they would look.

DH The original concept was to save and move three buildings as a shield. Demolition makes all this invalid. If you see bigger boxier buildings that were acceptable in the 1800's as a solution, as the tenant requires, the links are not very convincing. Use big buildings but not too big. Replicate big buildings with little pieces could make it work. Driving in from the east, the blue building is not right for the lead-in. That first building should a fake barn. Linking is forced.

MM The certificate of appropriateness was approved based on adaptive reuse. We are talking about a major change. Agree if a big building is built behind we can fit in and blend with the district. Recreating the buildings would obviate the use of connections. Have very great reservations. It is not what we want if our objective is to protect and preserve what is there. Otherwise, it won't be the same.

KAB Prefer to move all three buildings. We need to rank them in order of importance. Have the blue house next to the yellow house. Perhaps we should leave it as is. Would like to have the buildings remain.

DB The town has clearly indicated its first priority is to preserve the character of the town. We need to consider all possibilities before contemplating demolition of any of the buildings.

RR People have built and rebuilt barns before. Achieve memory. Replacement is a generational aspect. Not bothered by replicating. Some sort of replicating is okay if done correctly.

AR Replicating nothing so dear had to be saved sense of scale built in mind's image.

DH How do buildings relate to each other if replicated? How will buildings be situated to each other?

WAVE needs to come back with some ideas for replication or for preserving structures while remembering that adaptive reuse of the existing buildings was a compromise.

MR Hears three different ways of progressing: replicate and improve; from scratch and don't worry about precedent; save and preserve existing buildings thought not to be possible. MM Or do nothing.

MR We have done due diligence. Can look at ways of going forward; look at massing. Need time to think about options-replicating.

KAB There is a way to incorporate the past represented by the existing buildings.

RR Maintain the essence of the site plan.

MR Need to avoid the costly spinning of wheels.

RR Build small models as a way of studying massing and big blocks. Start with massing but without getting stuck in the details.

MM Asking what preserving site plan is all about.

MR We can't change the footprint. We will work with massing without changing the footprint. Move the blue house to where the brown house is situated. This is different from breaking up the site plan. We need some time to process.

KAB A new meeting will be scheduled. Let AR know how you are doing.

9:00 Twin Seafood. Awning design AR reviewed signs with John and spoke with Scott Mutch.

KAB A J-Peg was sent out to the HDC members. The font is good. Put the fish on the side of the awning in the triangle. It may not be visible on the sloped area of the front of the awning.

AR Two lines of text on the front flap. "Twin Seafood" with fish on the sides spread out. Wording is too tight. Widen it by a foot. The awning is a nice addition. Have "Grill and Market" on both sides and in one line.

DH The lights will have to come out.

KAB Use slightly smaller lettering to have more blue space. Extend the words "Twin Seafood" out. Shrink the font size. Use an older looking font.

RR Agrees.

MM Awning should be wider than the doorway. Lettering should be all capitals and use a smaller font and use a serif. "Grill and Market" in different font without a font. Moved and seconded to approve an awning up to 12 feet wide, wider than front door. "Twin Seafood" on the awning flap, slightly smaller font than depicted. "Grill and Market" in a sans-serif font and the "older" looking fish to be on both sides of the awning. Artwork to be reviewed by AR. Check with Scott Mutch about lighting. Voted unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:36PM

Respectfully submitted

  
David T. Barrat  
Secretary